Conspiracism, secrecy and security in restoration France: denouncing the Jesuit menace

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Conspiracism, Secrecy and Security in Restoration France: Denouncing the Jesuit Menace

Geoffrey Cubitt [*]

Abstract: *»Verschwörungstheorien, Geheimnis und Sicherheit im Frankreich der Restaurationszeit: das Propagieren der Jesuiten-Bedrohung«.* This article explores the historical and conceptual relationships between themes of conspiracy, secrecy and securitization, firstly through a general schematic discussion of their interconnections, and then through a specific focus on the polemics and strategies of the French Bourbon Restoration period (1814-1830). The conspiracist visions of this period are contextualized by relating them to longer-term evolutions in conceptions of the state and of politics, and to the impact of the French Revolution. Comparisons are drawn between the strategies of the Right, focusing on the idea of revolutionary conspiracy and generally linked to a governmentalist agenda, and of the Left, focusing on a vision of Jesuit or theocratic conspiracy and usually oppositional in character. The final section of the article analyses the denunciations of the Jesuits in greater detail, through the lens of a model of securitization. Emphasis is placed on the ways in which denouncers of Jesuit conspiracy combined historical argument with legal attacks on the Jesuits' corporate existence, on the fluidity of their conceptions of the conspiratorial threat, and on the ways in which denunciations of Jesuit conspiracy reflect broader liberal anxieties over power and identity in an age of political transformation.

Keywords: conspiracism, conspiracy theories, Jesuits, secrecy, securitization, Bourbon Restoration.

1. Introduction

Visions of imagined conspiracy supply scholars with, in Frédéric Monier's words, "a privileged post for observing the fears and apprehensions, and beyond that the political and social sensibilities," of modern societies (Monier 2003).[1] In the century following the French Revolution, such visions were

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[1] There is a large and pluridisciplinary literature on conspiracism and conspiracy theories in different places and periods. See Byford (2011) for a recent overview. Much of this literature (e.g. Campion-Vincent 2005; Taguieff 2005; Fenster 2008; Knight 2002) focuses on conspiracy theories in contemporary culture or in twentieth-century history: for longer per-

pronounced and ubiquitous, and were elaborated across the political spectrum: while conservatives and reactionaries denounced the conspiracies of revolutionaries, associated at certain times particularly with Freemasonry, liberals and republicans set themselves to expose the hidden reality of counter-revolutionary and theocratic politics, identified by many with the Jesuit order. The present article will briefly address the conspiracist interpretations and rhetoric of the Right, but will dwell more deeply on this anti-Jesuit tradition. The article focuses especially on the political culture and experiences of the Bourbon Restoration period (1814-1830) of French history. This was a period of ambiguity and uncertainty – a period of apparent promise for post-Revolutionary liberalism undercut by perpetual dangers of counter-revolutionary retrenchment. Denunciations of conspiracy by the Jesuits and their perceived allies (identified with varying degrees of vagueness using terms like the Congrégation and the *parti prêtre*) supplied a language for denouncing the politics of theocracy and ultraroyalism that had appeal both to outright opponents of the Bourbon regime and to those who sought to steer it in a more liberal direction, and also indeed to some of its more conservative supporters – men like the Comte de Montlosier, whose *Mémoire à consulter sur un système religieux et politique tendant à renverser la religion, la société et le trône* (1826), couched in the tones of Gallican monarchism, was to be the most influential tract in this anti-theocratic tradition.

In previous work, I have explored the contribution of the conspiracy theory concerning the Jesuits to the politics of Restoration France, and its place in a broader history of conspiracist thinking (Cubitt 1993).[2] This article has a different purpose – to examine Restoration attacks on the Jesuits in relation to the concept of securitization. How do models of securitization assist our analysis of the themes and terms of anti-Jesuit denunciations? How, in turn, can reflections on the ways in which Jesuit conspiracy was imagined nourish our thinking on securitization processes? My discussion of these issues moves from the broad and schematic to the particular. Section 2 presents introductory general observations on the triangular relationships between concepts of security, secrecy and conspiracy. Section 3 contextualizes the developments of the Restoration period by sketching a schematic outline of long term evolutions in the way these concepts were entangled. Section 4 focuses more specifically on the ideological conditions of the Restoration itself and outlines certain comparisons between the conspiracist thinking of Left and Right during this period. Section 5

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spectives, see the older works of e.g. Hofstadter (1965), Davis (1971), Roberts (1972), Rogalla von Bieberstein (1976), and Poliakov (1980-5). My own earlier thinking on conspiracy theories in general is set out in Cubitt (1989a; 1993, esp. 1-3, 295-309).

[2] Many of the aspects of nineteenth-century French anti-Jesuitism that are referred to here are explored further in Cubitt (1993), and also in Leroy (1992). For discussion of the anti-Jesuit tradition across a longer period, see Brou (1906-7), Leroy (2000), Burke (2001).

explores the denunciations of Jesuit and Jesuitical conspiracy in more detail, analysing their strategy and thematics in relation to the concept of securitization.

2. Security, Secrecy and Conspiracy: General Observations

The starting point for this discussion is the so-called 'Copenhagen school' framework – the model for thinking about security set out most influentially in Buzan, Wæver and De Wilde's *Security; a New Framework for Analysis* (1998). The Copenhagen school rejects a reified notion of security, such as would provide criteria for distinguishing 'real' security threats from false ones, in favour of a constructivist understanding of 'securitization' as a process. Securitization, in this understanding, consists in the designation of particular fields or realms of activity as ones in which a existential threat is being imminently posed to the survival and integrity of some 'referent object', whose value and legitimacy require special measures of security – measures, in other words, which go beyond and perhaps infringe the normal rules of politics – to be taken in its defence. Securitization begins in arguments ('securitizing moves'), advanced by individuals or groups ('securitizing actors'), who detect or wish to affirm an urgent threat to the referent object, but securitization as a process is only accomplished when these arguments gain acceptance in decision-making circles, and sufficient acquiescence from society at large for security measures to be set in place – a process which may or may not involve the establishment or mobilization of specialist security agencies or institutions (Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde 1998, esp. ch. 2). Security arguments are always likely to be contested, whether because the existence or gravity of the threat is questioned, or because the exceptional measures proposed for dealing with that threat are regarded as excessive or as posing a threat to other referent objects. Processes of securitization may in some cases therefore require a certain secrecy or may be actively resisted in certain quarters.

Though the term 'security *dispositif*' is not present in the original Copenhagen school formulation, it offers a convenient way of describing the usually heterogeneous assemblage of material and immaterial elements (discourses, arguments, images, regulatory measures, laws, institutional and spatial arrangements) through which securitization is enacted and expressed in particular cases. Thus understood, a 'security *dispositif*' is not a rigid structure, but a flexible amalgam of different elements that may be combined in different ways at different moments. Crucial to the concept of a '*dispositif*', however, is the idea that such combinations have (in Foucault's words) 'a dominant strategic function' of 'responding to an urgent need' (Foucault 1980, 194-5) – in this case that of protecting the referent object against existential threat. The notion

of a 'security *dispositif*' thus reinforces the notions of urgency and response that are implicit in the concept of securitization itself.

Building on the Copenhagen school model, we may suggest that four distinct though often interconnecting motions of identification typically play a part in securitization processes and in the 'security *dispositifs*' they give rise to. These identify, respectively, the 'referent object' (in modern societies usually the state or nation, though it may in some cases be e.g. a dynasty, religion or the church, or some abstraction like public morality or modern civilisation); the human forces threatening that object (often but not always a definable collectivity – a group or race or secret society or political movement); the terrain or terrains on which the threat is allegedly posed (typically the traditional terrains of political, military and diplomatic activity, but possibly also including terrains like the economy, education, culture or the environment); and the means or agencies of redress (the special measures, particular laws, institutions, media or police and security agencies that are looked to as the means of combating the security threat). The relationships between these identifying motions, and the relative weight attached to them at particular moments, are however historically variable: not every denunciation of a menacing collectivity pays detailed attention to the modes of redress; not every affirmation of a referent object's vulnerability on a particular terrain clearly specifies the enemy. In some scenarios, already established security agencies – police forces, intelligence services, religious inquisitions – take the initiative in mapping security terrains and denouncing new groups of enemies. In other cases, securitization may be driven more by a sudden shift in definitions of the referent object (a shift from legitimate monarchy to republican democracy, for example), or by the increased currency of a particular vision of the subversive enemy (a conspiracy theory about a particular group, for example).

Historicizing security means paying attention not just to accomplished processes of securitization, but to security arguments, the debates they provoke, and the larger cultural imaginaries they draw upon. These arguments, debates and imaginaries may be politically, socially and culturally significant even when the means of carrying securitization into institutional effect are lacking. Nor, as the Copenhagen school themselves make clear (Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde 1998, 27), need we restrict our attention in such a historicizing project to cases where the terminology of 'security' that has become familiar in the contexts of modern state activity and international relations is explicitly in use: the concept of securitization may also be a useful analytical device in exploring earlier patterns of alarm and response, revolving, for example, around concepts of heresy, witchcraft, conspiracy or cabal. In what follows, we will focus particularly on the long-running triangular entanglement of security arguments with notions of secrecy and of conspiracy.

Security and secrecy have obvious, but sometimes ambiguous, historical linkages. Secrecy – in the sense of information or interests concealed or ex-

empted from scrutiny – may be envisaged as an attribute of the referent object (the state, for example): state secrets may be part of what security measures are designed to protect. But secrecy may also be part of the means of protection: the need to securitize security operations themselves breeds an escalating clandestinity – a growth of the 'secret state' – which can in turn provoke mistrust and suspicion, especially when security agencies are perceived to be (perhaps clandestinely) violating the legitimate secrets of others. "A symmetrical relationship of mistrust and fear" (Dewerpe 1994, 94) between security agencies and citizens, grounded in the duality of secrecy as means of power and means of evasion, weaves itself through many security scenarios.

Conspiracism – the tendency to think of politics and society in terms of conspiratorial machinations – further enriches the mix. Conspiracy combines connotations of secrecy with ones of collusion, planning and deception. Conspiracies can be imagined against the security of the state (or some other referent object), in defence of that security, and in subversion of that defence from within: discourses evoking them can articulate the ways in which security actors and security agencies view the world around them, or can form part of the way they themselves are viewed. The element of secrecy in conspiracy, furthermore, can be taken to operate on different imagined levels: what is felt to be secret may, in some cases, be the very existence of an unsuspected group of political actors (a secret society or occult government); in others, it may be the hidden motives or concealed loyalties of recognised public figures (as in the frequent denunciations of politicians as conspirators during the French Revolution) or the secret machinations of security agencies themselves (Cubitt 1989b). There are multiple ways, therefore, in which conspiracist thinking can help to prime, or in turn can be primed by, securitization strategies. Unravelling these historically also involves taking stock of significant variations in conspiracism itself as a discursive phenomenon. One must distinguish, for example, between conspiracism of the diffuse kind, which habitually seeks conspiratorial explanations of events without necessarily joining them together in a larger pattern, and conspiracism as we find it in the more developed conspiracy theory visions, which posits the conspiratorial agency of a particular group – the Jews, or Jesuits, or Freemasons, or Communists, for example – as a driving force in contemporary affairs, and perhaps in history more generally, and which maintains this as a standing explanation and a key alarmist theme over a significant period (Cubitt 1989a, 13-14; 1993, 1). Conspiracist discourse also oscillates between a preoccupation with the exposure of individual guilt (involving the denunciation of conspirators and the discovery of links between them) and the interpretative mapping of sinister patterns in history and current affairs, in which emphasis is placed on the deceptiveness of surface appearances and the binary character of a reality shaped by the confrontations of good and evil, but in which culprits may be only vaguely identified (Cubitt 1989a, 19-24; 1993, 296).

3. Contextualizing Restoration Conspiracism

Moving on from these general reflections on the complex intersections between notions of security, of secrecy and of conspiracy, but remaining at a schematic level, we may posit a historical evolution, from the security world of the early absolutist state to that of modern political societies. In the imaginative economy of the absolutist state, legitimate secrecy is concentrated around the ruler: secretiveness is an attribute of sovereignty, a "ruse du pouvoir" (Dewerpe 1994, 75) and ordinary members of society, individually or collectively, have no right to protection from the ruler's sovereign gaze. Conspiracy as a political crime is similarly concentrated: it takes the form either of conspiracy against the person of the monarch, or of conspiracy to subvert or to resist the monarch's intentions and the operations of monarchical power. In the emerging state forms of the modern era, this absolutist conception gives way gradually to one in which sovereignty is seen as vested in society or in the people, and in which state secrecy can therefore only be justified in terms of the public interest (Dewerpe 1994, 77-9). At the same time, however, the increasing complexity of state structures means that opportunities for the illicit subversion or circumvention of power, and space to imagine conspiracies within and around those structures, are generally increased. Transparency is withheld, suspicions of occult government or corruption within the system proliferate.

Although post-enlightenment thinking gives a central place to notions of transparency, it by no means abolishes the tendency to view secrecy as an operational necessity of statecraft (Dewerpe 1994, 79-81). Indeed, the modern tendency to posit the state as the mechanism through which society legitimately regulates and thus ensures and protects the well-being of its members simply transforms the terms in which this necessity is affirmed. It is in the interest of society, and of whatever values society is presumed to embody, that the state claims for its agencies a monopoly over "la méfiance légitime" (Karila-Cohen 2005, 731, 746; also Dewerpe 1994, 85-7) – a right of scrutiny over society, coupled with a right to be themselves exempted from scrutiny where the needs of security require it. In affirming this monopoly, however, it also acquires powers of penetration into society that bring it into conflict with claims of privacy as a crucial aspect of the liberty of individuals.

If the state is one zone of contention in this transition to a modern politics of security and conspiracy, public opinion is another. The promise of post-enlightenment thinking is that public opinion, articulated through the press and perhaps through representative institutions, can ensure the transparency that state structures may withhold. Yet this protection is itself uncertain, if opinion itself can be subverted or manipulated. Corruption of public opinion, whether through calumny or the false inflation of reputations (a common theme in French Revolutionary conspiracy polemics), or through the penetration of the media or of education – the twin vehicles of public enlightenment – by a vi-

cious sectional interest, becomes a recurrent theme of conspiracist discourse in the modern era.

The conspiracist denunciations of the French Restoration, both on the Right and on the Left, participate in these long-term evolutions. The Restoration, however, was a period of ambiguity and uncertainty, at once shaped by and framed in tension with the ruptures of the Revolutionary era that preceded it.[3] The Revolution had decisively called in question, without yet comprehensively banishing from the stage of history, the monarchical concepts of sovereignty that had underpinned the political culture of the old regime. The Revolution had also, in its Jacobin phase especially, witnessed the escalating development of a security culture grounded in an almost delirious vision of conspiracy against the Revolution and against the public interest: Revolutionary patriotism was framed in terms of ceaseless vigilance and readiness to denounce the enemies of the people (see e.g. Cubitt 1989; 1999; Tackett 2000; Linton 2004; Furet 1981, 53-8; Hunt 1984, 38-45). The Revolutionary Terror that resulted was in many respects a cautionary episode for the generations that followed: it carried a warning, to liberals as well as to conservatives, of the dangers of a politics founded on the institutionalisation of conspiracist mistrust (e.g. Malandain 2011, 168). Even as they sought to defend the achievements of the Revolution in the face first of Napoleonic despotism and then of Restoration ultra-royalist reaction, post-Revolutionary liberals would feel the need to distance themselves from this Jacobin example.

On the other hand, Restoration political culture continued to be marked by a pervasive binarism, grounded in the historical cleavage that the Revolution was perceived to have initiated. Both on the Left and on the Right – and the distinction between political Left and Right is itself, of course, an expression of this binarism – the assumption that the modern era was the site of a fundamental confrontation between Revolution and Counter-Revolution, between the spirits and legacies of the Ancien Régime and of the new world that the Revolution had initiated, and that this was so to speak the concealed reality beneath the surface vicissitudes of modern politics, was widespread. Everything, the liberal polemicist abbé de Pradt affirmed in 1825, was now reducible to a single question: "for or against the Revolution, before or after the Revolution" (De Pradt 1825, 237). Some political actors identified intransigently with one of the extremes in this polarity, and were apt to find that the methods of the conspiratorial secret society – republican or Bonapartist on the one hand (Spitzer 1971;

[3] For an exposition of another aspect of this ambiguity, involving the tension between a politics of *oubli* geared to 'forgetting' and therefore healing the social and political wounds of the Revolutionary period, and a contrary politics geared to remembering and expiating Revolutionary criminality and apostasy, see Kroen (1998; 2000, ch. 1). General surveys of Restoration politics include Bertier de Sauvigny (1966); Jardin and Tudesq (1983); Waresquiel (1996). On the politics of the Restoration Left more specifically, see Alexander (2003).

1973; Lambert 1995; Tardy 2006), ultraroyalist or theocratic on the other (Bertier de Sauvigny 1948) – were the only ways of pursuing their extremist agendas. Others – realists or moderates of either camp – sought to craft a middle way, placing faith in the constitutional monarchism embodied in the Charter of 1814 to balance the legitimate interests of monarchy and society. The pervasive binarism meant, however, that moderate positions were perpetually vulnerable to the suspicion of concealing conspiratorial extremist agendas. And with suspicion came the possibility of denunciation: wary though Frenchmen might be of rekindling the excesses of the Terror, readiness to denounce a conspiratorial enemy continued for many to be a key element in civic responsibility. Denunciation, as Gilles Malandain has put it in summarizing this position, was "necessary in order to re-establish an indispensable self-transparency of the social body and to emerge from the Revolutionary anxiety [*inquiétude*]" (Malandain 2011, 168).

Coupled to this habit of suspicion was an entrenched ambivalence about state power, again across most of the political spectrum. The Restoration inherited a potent police apparatus, shaped by the successive authoritarian concerns of the Ancien Régime, the Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire, and geared to assorted forms of surveillance and clandestine action (Malandain 2003, 67-73, Riberette 1979; Berlière 2003). It inherited also habits of administrative thought that viewed the state as the exerciser of a necessary and persistent surveillance over society, increasingly justifying this surveillance in terms of the state's function of developing and deploying expert knowledge of society "and of the tensions traversing it" (Karila-Cohen 2005, 747). These ideological and organisational elements were in obvious tension with those other currents in post-Enlightenment thinking that stressed the primacy of individual liberty, the need for transparency in government, and the sanctity of the private sphere. These tensions found no stable resolution in the Restoration period, or for a good time afterwards. Out of power, politicians of different ideological hues denounced the manipulative and inquisitorial practices of the police and sounded the alarm over threats to the liberties of families and individuals. As part of this, they were often scathing in analysing the destructive anti-conspiratorial obsessions of public officials, Guizot's *Des Conspirations et de la justice politique* (1821) being the most notable work in this vein. As potential users of power, however, few politicians were willing to forgo or to dismantle the facilities of control and surveillance that the post-Revolutionary state afforded. As Pierre Karila-Cohen has shown, parliamentary debate over the *fonds secrets* – the funding of the political police – was always lively, but was underscored by a fairly general acceptance that secret policing methods of some sort or other were a natural and necessary facet of state power (Karila-Cohen 2005).

4. Conspiracy, Government and Opposition: Right and Left

Conceptions of a conspiratorial threat to the French state or French society tended during this period to prioritise internal over external dangers. This is to some extent an artificial distinction. Both on the left and on the right, the binary struggle was conceived to be universal rather than merely French in its scope and implications. Frenchmen avidly scrutinized the press for reports of Revolutionary or Counter-Revolutionary advances in other countries, and in the case of the Jesuits, the idea that the hidden enemy had its organizational centre in Rome – that it was, in the liberal lawyer Dupin *aîné's* much repeated words a "sword whose hilt is at Rome and whose point is everywhere" (*Procès* 1826, 129) – was a common polemical theme. Even in this case, however, those imagining a Jesuit occult power were at least as likely to locate its centre at 'Montrouge' – the site of the Jesuit noviciate to the South of Paris, taken by many to be the order's French headquarters. The emphasis was not on conspiratorial aggressions by one state power against another: the primary enemy was not the foreigner, but the ideological enemy within France itself.

Both on the Right and on the Left, then, denunciations of a conspiratorial enemy were a recurrent feature of French Restoration political mentalities. Right-wing denunciations of Revolutionary conspiracy and left-wing denunciations of the Jesuits and their associates had certain similarities, and performed some of the same legitimising and explanatory functions. A closer inspection, however, also reveals differences. The most obvious is that the Right's denunciation of conspiracy remained, throughout the Restoration, largely focused on an oppositional threat, a threat from outside the state structure. The Left's denunciations of conspiracy, by contrast, dealt more flexibly with a conspiracy that was sometimes imagined to be threatening the structures of power from without, and sometimes to be entrenched within them as a form of occult government. Prior to 1820 (and more briefly in 1828-9), liberals were able to see Restoration monarchy as offering, at least potentially, a viable constitutional structure for the development of a liberal polity: the Jesuits were denounced as a danger, but not yet as an integral part of the system. Between 1820 and 1827 and after 1829, as the ultraroyalist grip on Restoration government was felt to tighten, denunciations of Jesuit conspiracy focused more and more on the idea of a governmental power colonized and subverted from within. The ultraroyalist ministries of the period were denigrated first as governments allied to the Jesuits and then as governments in thrall to the Jesuits, or simply Jesuit governments. "The word Jesuit today characterizes the whole system of the government", wrote the liberal journalist Thiers in early 1827 (in Marquant 1959, 392). Though the theme of Jesuit occult government could still be deployed by liberals in ways which avoided openly challenging the Bourbon monarchy

itself, images depicting Charles X himself as a Jesuit also began to circulate (Cubitt 1993, 100). Encompassed within this vision of a Jesuit power at work within the structures of government and administration was the idea that the apparatus of state security had itself been subverted, indeed, had become an active part of the means of subversion: the police had become, in liberal parlance, 'the police of the Congrégation' or 'of Montrouge'.

Practical differences in the counter-conspiratorial strategies of Left and Right followed from this difference in the relationship to state power. The conspiracist vision of the Right evolved in a relatively close relationship to the security apparatus and to legal definitions of internal security.[4] Gilles Malandain's research on the evolution and uses of the law relating to conspiracies against the security of the state in France across the first half of the nineteenth century allow certain key points to be emphasised (Malandain 2003, 55-67). The Restoration preserved the 1810 Napoleonic Penal Code's relatively narrow definition of 'crimes against the internal security of the state' as crimes against the life or person of the monarch and his family, including attempts or conspiracies to destroy or change the royal form of government or to disrupt the line of succession or to incite rebellion against royal authority, together with attempts or conspiracies to stir up civil war or other forms of internecine devastation, but excluding for example such crimes as obstructing the functioning of parliamentary assemblies which had found a place in the Revolutionary Code of 1791. The Restoration, however, broke new ground in its provisions for handling offences against security, by referring such offences to the special jurisdiction of the Chambre des Pairs, the higher parliamentary chamber functioning here as a legal tribunal, crucially without a jury.

The Restoration also carried over from the Napoleonic Code that Code's specific handling of the relationship between '*complot*', '*attentat*' and completed action, in relation to crimes against the monarch and his authority. By applying the same penalty – death and confiscation of property – to these three different moments in the working out of a conspiratorial design, the Code offered the advantage, for the authorities, of being able to nip conspiratorial projects in the bud, as soon as an agreement of individuals to act together in a treasonable purpose could be demonstrated, without the need to wait for concrete action, still less for the design to be put into effect (Malandain 2003, 62-7; 2011, 122-5). The disadvantage, for the citizen, lay in the opening up of a massive exception to the otherwise generally held principle that only actions and not sentiments or intentions or suspected dispositions should be regarded as criminal. Critics like Guizot were quick to denounce the encouragement thus given to the authorities to deploy informers and *agents provocateurs*, and speculatively to

[4] For continuations of the governmentalist and conservative preoccupation with conspiracy in the decades after the period considered here, see Tardy (2012); Poncier (1999); for a more general overview of the secret societies mythology, Roberts (1972).

construct allegedly conspiratorial patterns out of patchworks of vaguely suspicious '*faits généraux'* (Guizot, 1821; see also Tardy 2008). Where conspiracy in the strictest sense of a provable conjuration of actors to achieve a particular end proved hard to establish, as in the case of Louvel's assassination of the Duc de Berry in 1820, ultraroyalist commentators fell back on the notion of a 'conspiracy of ideas', in which the perceived congruence of liberal doctrines with the regicidal outcome represented by Louvel's attack was considered sufficient to establish the deed itself as in effect the outcome of a liberal conspiracy (Malandain 2011, 35; see also Skuy 2003).

On the Left (and among more conservative critics of the Jesuits) as on the Right, the idea of a conspiratorial threat to the personal security of the monarch was frequently evoked. Regicide – as allegedly practised by the Jesuits against monarchs like Henri III and Henri IV and attempted against others – had long been a standard reference of anti-Jesuit polemic, and it retained its place in the repertoire under the Restoration. "It is against the principal members of the Bourbon family that the Jesuits turned the daggers of their fanatical pupils", one author reminded royalist readers in 1824 (Flocon and Beckhaus 1824, xi), while two others in 1825 pointedly opened and closed a new history of Jesuit conspiracies against the Bourbons with the assertion that "The dagger which struck down the best of our kings [Henri IV] threatens his children" (Monglave and Chalas 1825, 1, 423). But while the regicidal theme remained popular, its uses on the Left were now mainly tactical: it is questionable whether many of those who denounced the Jesuits' influence in the 1820s really feared a Jesuit-directed assault on the life of the monarch. When Louvel assassinated the Duc de Berry in 1820, the liberal press evoked the history of Jesuit regicide as a way of deflecting the ultraroyalist claim that regicidal outrages were necessarily liberal or revolutionary in origin, but their principal argument was that Louvel was an isolated fanatic, not that he was part of a Jesuit conspiracy (Cubitt 1993, 199-200). Liberals at this moment no doubt lacked the influence in police and judicial circles to launch a serious hunt for Jesuit regicidal conspirators, but a broader reading of anti-Jesuit denunciations suggests that their apprehensions were in any case focused in other areas. The elements composing the loose-knit '*dispositif*' that took shape around the sometimes nebulous idea of a Jesuit-directed conspiracy may be anatomized under the four headings that emerged from our earlier schematic modelling of securitization: referent object, threatening forces, fields of insecurity, means of redress.

5. Restoration Anti-Jesuitism: Conspiracism, Legality and Securitization

The affective force of conspiracy theories, as of arguments for securitization, lies in the assumption that the conspiracy is aimed against a referent object (or

a plurality of such objects) whose legitimacy is generally recognised and whose existence and integrity are therefore highly valued. Establishing the definition of such referent objects is likely to be harder – but therefore possibly also more urgent – under conditions of contestation or division, where the very basis of political legitimacy is or has recently been in question. The uses of the anti-Jesuit conspiracy vision in Restoration France were closely linked to the complexities of an oppositional politics that sought to present itself as a defence of core political values, while challenging the way those values were interpreted by ultra-royalist opinion. It was linked also, at a more pragmatic level, to the need to bring together different factions of opposition – royalist and Gallican as well as liberal or closet Bonapartist or Republican – whose potential for collaboration lay more in common hostility to theocracy than in any broader political agreement. A certain equivocation, or at least a degree of flexibility or mutability in the definition of the referent object were common features of the conspiracist vision. Montlosier's famous denunciation described 'un système religieux et politique tendant à renverser la religion, la société et le trône' – a triadic formulation of the referent object with an obvious appeal to conservative royalists of a Gallican persuasion like the author himself (Montlosier 1826a). The Liberal newspaper *Le Constitutionnel*, on the other hand, declared in the same year that France saw in the reapparition of the Jesuits

> the counter-revolution in its entirety, a war to the death against her institutions, against her laws, her *moeurs*, her enlightenment and her prosperity; the ruination of the liberty which she has only obtained through so many efforts and sacrifices, and the return of the bloody regime of theocracy (*Le Constitutionnel* 23 September 1826).

The emphasis here was on the defence of an institutional, legal and cultural status quo, viewed as existentially fundamental to the nation, but defined less through an association with monarchy and religion than as the moderate liberal legacy of the Revolutionary achievement. Though differently inflected, conservative and liberal formulations of the referent object were not necessarily incompatible: anti-Jesuit polemics frequently combined elements of the two.

If the definition of the referent object was flexible and variable, the identification of the threatening forces also presented certain ambiguities, though the Jesuits were at the core of most accounts. The most obvious ambiguities stemmed from the assumed and imagined but often vaguely specified relationship between the Jesuits in the strict sense (those who were or were held to be actual members of the Society of Jesus) and the ranks of the so-called Congrégation – the latter term referring to what was alleged to be a secret society of Jesuitical laymen masquerading as a pious confraternity (Bertier de Sauvigny 1948, 369-74, 402-7; Cubitt 1993, 80-2, 216-8).[5] Denouncers of the Jesuits saw

[5] The conspiracist vision of the Congrégation conflated perceptions of a genuine pious association directed by the Jesuit Père Ronsin with ones probably reflecting the activity of an ul-

the Congrégation (or sometimes the *congrégations* in the plural, to indicate multiple organisations) as a powerful network of Jesuit affiliations – an organized horde of 'short-robed Jesuits' extending the reach of Jesuit power in the political arena and throughout society (Cubitt 1993, 80-2). According to the *Journal des débats*, the Congrégation "is to Jesuitism what the pioneers are to the army: it prepares the way" (*Journal des débats* 13 March 1826). But though this network was frequently denounced, its structures typically remained opaque; indeed this opacity was sometimes cited as proof of its Jesuit character. In Montlosier's account, the Congrégation was "as confused in its composition as in its object, and in its object as in its origin":

> It is as impossible for me to say with precision what it is, as to show how, in the past, it has successively formed, extended, organized itself. I say organized, with the reservation that sometimes its body is whole; and then one sees a trunk and limbs; at other times some of these limbs withdraw from it, it appears mutilated. The body itself is composed in such a way as to be able, when convenient, to dispel itself like a shadow; and then one wonders whether it is true that a congrégation exists (Montlosier 1826a, 17-9).

The myth of the Congrégation significantly extended the range of anti-Jesuit suspicions. A dual logic characteristic of conspiracist reasoning came into operation: wherever reactionary or theocratic encroachments were detected, even if the immediately observable agents were not apparently members of the Jesuit order, the Jesuits' hidden hand was suspected; wherever actual Jesuits were found, even if their activities appeared outwardly inoffensive, a broader and darker conspiratorial design was deemed to be in operation. This dual patterning of the political imagination contributed strikingly to the denunciations of theocracy and occult government that became a ubiquitous feature of oppositional politics.

The fields of insecurity – the terrains on which an existential threat to the referent object or objects (in their fluctuating definitions) was considered to be being posed – were thus diverse. Traditional references to regicide, though persistent, now shared the field with other denunciations: the controlling influence of the Jesuits was detected in the realm of ultraroyalist politics, in the hellfire preaching of missionaries in the French countryside, in the proliferation of pious and charitable associations, in the education of the social elite. Even domesticity was a terrain of vulnerability: Stendhal claimed in 1826 that scarcely a respectable householder in France would have failed to notice the efforts made to turn his servants into Jesuit spies (*New Monthly Magazine*, October 2006). Critiques of Jesuit casuistry dating back to the seventeenth century were recycled to show the damaging effect that Jesuit education or Jesuit confessors would have on public and private morality (Cubitt 1993, 258-

traroyalist secret society, the Chevaliers de la Foi (Bertier de Sauvigny 1848, 369-74; see also Casanova 1970, 104-124).

74). Wherever the tentacles of Jesuit affiliation or the sinister influence of Jesuit teachers or confessors could be imagined as reaching, referent objects were imagined to be under threat.

Finding means of combatting such a proliferating, multi-faceted, outwardly amorphous and shifting conspiratorial menace, other than simply by publicity, was inevitably problematic. The Jesuits' opponents turned not to the Penal Code's definitions of treasonable conspiracy, but to the law on associations, coupled to a vociferous strategy of historical exposure. Legal and historical arguments were closely entwined. Where the law on conspiracies focused attention on actions and intentions, real or alleged, invocations of the law on associations could only target the Jesuits' existence as a collective or corporate entity – on the face of it, a rather oblique way of grappling with a conspiratorial enemy. Hence the energy devoted by anti-Jesuit commentators to cataloguing the past misdeeds attributed to the Jesuit order – listing regicidal attacks, listing acts of intolerance, assembling references to the sinister influence of Jesuit confessors – and assembling also the numerous condemnations and criticisms of the Jesuit order issued by secular and ecclesiastical authorities over the three centuries of the order's previous existence (Cubitt 1993, 188-93). Recitation of the order's damnable *curriculum vitae* created a mood in which the mere fact of its presence on French soil could be presented as pregnant with menace, while the act of placing themselves in line with successive waves of earlier critics of the order allowed Restoration denouncers of Jesuit influence to deflect the charge of partisanship. By placing their moderate defence of the Revolutionary achievement under the patronage of traditions of public vigilance deeply rooted in the soil of the Ancien Régime, post-revolutionary liberals could reach out, across the binary divide, to Gallican monarchist opponents of theocracy like Montlosier. Nor was this an entirely cynical manoeuvre. Even as they approved the work of the Revolution in demolishing the structures of the Ancien Régime, many liberals looked back with a degree of anxious nostalgia to the days when powerful corporate bodies like the Parlements and the Sorbonne had been sturdy obstacles to Jesuit encroachments. In a post-Revolutionary society stripped of these defences, the rebuilding of security – whether by persuading contemporary institutions like the Cours Royales to assume the mantle of the Parlements, or by trusting in the press and parliamentary representatives to exercise a similar magistrature of vigilance informally – was a pressing priority (Cubitt 1993, 55-7).

Establishing continuity between Ancien Régime and post-Revolutionary traditions of vigilance was not, however, a straightforward matter. The Jesuit order itself had been banned from France in the 1760s and disbanded by the Papacy in 1774; when it was restored in 1814, its presence in France, as elsewhere in Europe, had to be rebuilt almost from scratch (Cubitt 1993, 19-20; for more detail, Burnichon 1914-21). It was restored, furthermore, into a world whose political and social co-ordinates had been disrupted and radically altered

by the experience of the Revolution. Under these circumstances, the revival of anti-Jesuit vigilance depended on arguing, firstly, that the restored Jesuit order was the same as the old one, and secondly, that the essential principles that had inspired previous condemnations of the order were still applicable. The first of these needs was met by pointing to the continuity of the Jesuit order's constitutions, deemed by anti-Jesuit commentators to be fundamental to the immutable spirit that had inspired the earlier record of Jesuit infamy: 'it is evidently the same spirit', declared Montlosier, 'since it is the same institution' (Montlosier 1826a, 129-30). In addressing the second need, anti-Jesuit commentators encountered a more complex set of issues, relating to the law on associations, and more specifically to the legal status of religious orders.[6]

In a ruling that continued to be much cited in the nineteenth century, the Parlement de Paris in 1762 had declared the Society of Jesus to be

> […] inadmissible by its nature in every organized state [État policé], as contrary to natural right, damaging to [attentatoire à] all spiritual and temporal authority, and tending to introduce into the Church and into States, under the specious veil of a religious institute, […] a political body, whose essence consists in a continuous activity aiming by all sorts of routes, direct or indirect, concealed or public, first at an absolute independence, and successively at the usurpation of all authority […] (Arrêt du Parlement de Paris).

Whether or not this pre-Revolutionary ruling retained any legal force in the new world of post-Revolutionary liberty – a matter that was debated – for Restoration opponents of the Jesuits its message of the intimate connection between evasion of surveillance, aspiration to independence and intended usurpation remained crucial. Restoration liberals, for all their advocacy of individual freedoms, seldom envisaged these freedoms as including an uncontrolled freedom of association. The influential liberal lawyer Dupin *aîné* asked rhetorically: "Where indeed is the people, where is the government that has ever accorded to its citizens the unlimited faculty of organizing themselves in secret as the fancy takes them, and of creating within the bosom of the great society secondary societies capable of counterbalancing by their influence the operation of the public powers" (Dupin 1860, 263). From this standpoint, organizations that avoided state surveillance – be they religious orders or secret societies or workers' associations – were intrinsically and doubly suspect: first because their secretive existence was in itself a denial of legitimate state authority, and second, because such resistance to scrutiny could only be explained by a presumed need to conceal an illicit agenda.

In the case of the Jesuits, arguments along these lines were given a specific inflection by debates over the legal status of unauthorized religious orders in

[6] For a more detailed exposition of the legal issues summarized in the next two paragraphs, see Cubitt 1993, 44-54. The main legal arguments against the Jesuits are put in Dupin 1860, 263-98, 519-34.

post-Revolutionary France. This status was ambiguous. The Revolution had abolished all religious congregations on French soil; the Napoleonic regime had replaced this with a regime of selective authorisation, which the Restoration had extended. The majority especially of male religious orders, including the Jesuits, remained formally unauthorised. Opponents of the Jesuits claimed that unauthorised meant illegal, and that the very fact of being a member of such an order was therefore a defiance of legality. Defenders of the Jesuits claimed that lack of authorization simply meant that the order (or the individual Jesuit establishment) as a collectivity was not a legally constituted corporate entity, empowered to own property and enter into contracts, but that the rights of its members as individuals – the religious liberty conferred by the Charter of 1814, the limited freedom of association allowed by the Penal Code – were quite sufficient to allow them to live together and work together, and to organize their lives together in accordance with the discipline of a religious order, even if this order itself had no formal status in the eyes of the law.

For most of the nineteenth century – until 1880, at least – the status of unauthorized religious orders remained contested, with neither the defenders nor the opponents of the Jesuits winning more than partial legal victories. This was so under the Restoration. Those seeking legal means of fighting back against what they saw as a reactionary theocratic conspiracy recognised the dubious legal status of the Jesuits as the point on which attack might be concentrated, but their efforts to exploit this weak point were only partially successful. The history of Montlosier's campaign – the main focus for these efforts – was one of a gradual narrowing of focus and partial frustration (Cubitt 1993, 78-9). In the *Mémoire à consulter*, Montlosier described a multifaceted conspiratorial 'système'. Four constituent 'scourges' or 'great calamities' were identified – the Congrégation, the Jesuits, Ultramontanism and "l'esprit d'envahissement des prêtres" (Montlosier 1826a) – and Montlosier's initial hope may have been that the perpetrators of clerical aggression might somehow be caught up in a general *procès de tendance* encompassing all of these circumstantial elements, in a method somewhat resembling that used by the Right to detect Revolutionary conspiracy. Legal opinion, when consulted about the technicalities, tended to dismiss this possibility (of which liberal lawyers anxious not to sharpen weapons that the Right might put to use were always likely to be suspicious), and also made clear that if Montlosier's four scourges were taken separately, only the first two (the Congrégation and the Jesuits) had the concreteness to be taken seriously as the objects of a judicial denunciation. Some indeed, considered it better to focus on the Jesuits alone, without whom, it was suggested "nothing of what M. de Montlosier complains of would take place" (Devaux et al. 1826, 2). When the Cour Royale de Paris considered the legal denunciation Montlosier had submitted to it (Montlosier 1826b), it dismissed three out of the four scourges as not constituting legal offences: only the case against the Jesuits was recognised, and even here the court declined to act, on the grounds that enforc-

ing the law against the Jesuits was a matter for the police. The Chambre des Pairs, to whom Montlosier submitted his complaints in the form of a petition (Montlosier 1827), again declined to broaden the focus, forwarding to the government only those parts of the petition that concerned the Jesuits' unauthorised existence. What had begun, in Montlosier's mind and in oppositional public opinion generally, as a broad and rather sprawling denunciation of conspiratorial theocratic aggressions became increasingly a movement focused on removing the Jesuits. Even on this ground, the movement's success was equivocal. Although Villèle's ultraroyalist government owed its downfall at the end of 1827 at least partially to public resentment of its failure to act against a religious order that the Cour Royale had now – in the spirit of the Parlement – declared to be not just technically illegal but founded on principles incompatible with the independence of civil government and with the Restoration's own constitutional Charter of 1814, the more liberal Martignac government that followed still hesitated to act, and limited itself when it finally did so in June 1828 to issuing ordinances preventing Jesuits and other members of unauthorised religious orders from operating in the educational arena. This was in practice an important blow to the restored Jesuit order, but it left much of what Montlosier and others had denounced under the heading of Jesuitical conspiracy largely untouched. After a brief lull, anti-Jesuit language continued to be deployed in the political arena, particularly after Charles X's instigation of the ultraroyalist Polignac ministry in 1828, and the Revolution of July 1830 which finally toppled the Restoration monarchy would be represented in liberal quarters as aimed as much against the Jesuits as against the dynasty (Cubitt 1993, 101-4).

But if the effort to combat the Jesuits as an association was inconclusive, the arguments used in these legal debates are significant also for the ways in which they bring certain distinctive liberal insecurities into focus. From the liberal point of view, two particular nightmares flickered around these debates. The first had to do with the use of the language of individual liberty to protect the Jesuits' shadowy existence as a collectivity. Liberals deplored the hypocrisy, as they saw it, of using liberal arguments to defend the notorious enemies of modern liberty. They also, going further, maintained that the Jesuits' vow of absolute obedience debarred them from being entitled to the benefits of individuality. Jesuits were not their own masters: their individuality was an illusion, masking a complete devotion to the Jesuit cause. Liberal and anti-Jesuit polemic extended this argument further, to cover those who were regarded as Jesuit affiliates: through the Congrégation and other networks, the Jesuit order was seen as reaching out to penetrate and enrol French society. This was the sinister vision sketched by the liberal deputy Duvergier de Hauranne in 1826:

> The councils of the prince, the law courts, the clergy, the *corps constitués*, and the ranks of all the citizens may be filled with affiliates unknown both to the prince and to the public, all acting in accord with secret orders, and exerting

> themselves to secure the acceptance of maxims contrary to the interests of the monarch and of the State (Duvergier de Hauranne 1826-8, vol. I, 199).

Here was the first nightmare insecurity of Liberalism: the breakdown of the liberal society of independent individuals through the misappropriation of Liberal freedoms.

The second nightmare had to do with surveillance and information. By crafting an elusive commonality for themselves in the shadow realm of the unauthorised, the Jesuits escaped the official scrutiny that would have been required for authorisation. According to their denouncers, this evasion of surveillance not only preserved the secrecy that surrounded Jesuit objectives; it also protected the operations of the order's own intelligence network – of the systematic espionage they were able to conduct by means of the confessional and of their secret affiliates in different walks of life (doctors, lawyers, servants and so on). According to Giovanni Libri's slightly later (1843) claims, the Jesuit headquarters at Rome contained enormous registers of the information on individuals gathered by these illicit means – "the most gigantic biographical compilation that has ever been assembled since the world began". "When [the Jesuits] need[ed] to act on an individual", Libri maintained, "they open the book, and they know immediately his life, his qualities, his defects, his projects, his family, his friends, his most secret liaisons" (Libri 1843, 978-9). The Jesuits' exemption from surveillance exposed society to Jesuit espionage; the privacy claimed for the unauthorized left the legitimate secrecy of individuals and families exposed to violation. Indeed, inasmuch as the Jesuits were able, through their affiliates, to manipulate the state security system, the very system of surveillance that they themselves evaded became the instrument of their own hold over society. In a world where information had become a crucial lever of power, the conspiratorial image of the Jesuits as usurpers of the surveillant function revealed the insecurities that haunted the liberal faith in transparency.

6. Conclusion

Applying the lens of a concept of securitization to conspiracist mentalities is an illuminating but also a narrowing interpretative project. Conspiracist reasoning has been part of the matrix of ideas and assumptions out of which, at certain historical moments, securitizing arguments and strategies have emerged, but it does not follow from this that models of securitization on their own give a full account of how conspiracy theories function socially and politically. Conspiracy theories do indeed denounce an existential threat to the welfare, integrity and even survival of a referent object or objects, but their possible functions run beyond the safeguarding of that object or objects through exceptional measures. Denunciations of sinister Jesuit influence could serve, under the Restoration, a variety of political purposes, helping oppositional spokesmen to

forge alliances, to deflect dangers, to discredit political opponents, and perhaps in some cases to conceal radical intentions behind a veil of moderate securitizing concern. These political functions were not precisely aligned with, and may sometimes even have been at odds with, the needs of a securitizing strategy geared not just to denouncing but also to nullifying a particular conspiratorial threat. Liberal and oppositional strategy proceeded on two levels, oscillating between the legal pursuit of the Jesuit order and the use of anti-Jesuit rhetoric for broader political purposes. It was partly because anti-Jesuit rhetoric served these two purposes simultaneously that its own contours and points of focus were often fluid and shifting, accommodating oscillation between different definitions of the referent objects threatened by Jesuit machinations, between broader and narrower accounts of the menacing forces and of the fields of their most menacing activity, and between historical and contemporary emphases.

Thinking about anti-Jesuitism with a model of securitization in mind does, however, enable us to see more clearly how shifts in visions of conspiracy could affect the terms of securitizing constructions. It allows us to see not just how conspiracist understandings could nourish the mood of alarm from which securitizing moves emerged, but also how ongoing reconfigurations of the Jesuitical menace contributed in the nineteenth century to a diversification of the territories on which security concerns would be elaborated. Mental constructions of menace and of vulnerability were broadened out from a focus on assassination and political espionage to socially-focused anxieties about education, association, the family and morality. And by exploring the mental world of conspiracism, we can also deepen our understanding of the insecurities that have informed the politics of securitization: at stake in the campaigns against Jesuit conspiracy were not only the openly stated perceived threats to state and society and modernity, but deeper insecurities at the heart of liberal values.

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